

'The circus is no fun for animals, it spells suffering'

Call to end use of animals for entertainment grows louder

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"Elephants don't stand on stools, birds don't balance on balls, and dogs don't jump through hoops on fire without cowering out of fear of pain," says film actress Raveena Tandon, adding her voice to the growing number of people speaking up against the use of animals in circuses.

In a letter to the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Harsh Vardhan ahead of World Circus Day (April 21), she said: "People visit circuses for en-

tertainment – for many children, this is their first interaction with animals such as elephants and exotic birds. The message that these institutions give out about animals is NOT what we want our future generations to learn."

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the modern circus. And internationally too, there is a call to end the use of animals in circuses. These campaigns stem from the fact that animals in circuses are held captive away from their natural

habitats. And there is additional suffering that comes from their training (involving punishment and torture, use of hooks, cutting feathers, etc), injuries and the manner in which they are held and transported. Earlier this month, foreign media reported the death of one elephant even as others ran loose on a Spanish motorway when a circus lorry carrying them overturned.

In violation of Indian law

quires circuses with performing A legislative amendment is needed to protect animals

Animals to register with the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) under the Performing Animal Registration Rules, 2001, as well as with the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) under the Recognition of Zoo Rules, 2009, if performing with exotic animals, say animal welfare representatives.

But this is often blatantly violated,

They add. Calling for a "complete and immediate" end to the use of animals in circuses, Tandon says, "I believe that it is time we dissociate cruelty from entertainment, and let these majestic creatures be where they belong. Our culture also has many traditional art forms which showcase the skill of our artists. They should be adopted by circuses to evolve into an engaging and

healthy entertainment." The campaign for national legislation to end animal use in circuses has the support of other voices, including Members of Parliament Shashi Tharoor, Butta Renuka, KC Ramamoorthy, advocate Prashant Bhushan and actress Dia Mirza.

The AWBI and CZA, the regulatory bodies for circuses, have recommended a legislative amendment to exclude all animals from circuses, based on numerous and repeated violation of rules, and cruelty to animals, a note from the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) said.

FIAPO has been running the 'End Circus Suffering' campaign that has helped free hundreds of circus animals, a note said.

Lauding the entertainment industry for speaking up, FIAPO director Varda Mehrotra said, "The process of training animals to per-

form unnatural tricks is inherently abusive, as shown in numerous inspection reports. FIAPO reiterates its appeal to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to take note of this and ban the use of all animals in circuses. It is time the ministry acted."

Rehabilitation

FIAPO's investigations have shown animals with broken bones, infectious diseases, permanent physical and mental disorders, crippled animals that can't even walk being forced by circuses to perform tricks, the note alleged. The 'End Circus Suffering' campaign has, till date, helped rehabilitate more than 160 abused animals from 15 circuses. FIAPO is supported by 82 members and over 200 non-government organisations nationwide



Legal armour

According to data from animal welfare organisations, India has 53 travelling circuses with approximately 560 animals. Indian law re-

and has also submitted a detailed report of the state of animals in circuses in India to the Union Environment Ministry.

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